Yokomizo, Moto

JAPANESE / INT 37

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We, Motomi (Tony) Yokomizo (narrator) and Sally Thomas (interviewer),

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NARRATOR

Motomi Yokomizo
Signature of narrator

Motomi Yokomizo
Name of narrator

3739 Elston Ave
Address

Oakland, Ca 94602

(dated) Sept 14, 1981.

not applicable
Signature of interviewer

Name of interviewer

INTERVIEWER

Address of interviewer

(dated)

Sally Thomas
Signature of interviewer

Sally Thomas
Name of interviewer

2918 Benvenue Apt #2
Address of interviewer

Berkeley, Ca 94705

(dated) September 14, 1981

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by

(Project Director) (Dated)

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Oakland Neighborhood
History Project

General Topic of Interview West Oakland and Japanese — Buddhists

Date September 14, 1981 Place home of narrator Length 90 minutes

| Narrator | Interviewer |
|---|---|
| Name Motomi Yokomizo | Name Sally Thomas |
| Address 3734 Elston Avenue Oakland, Ca. 94602 | Address 2918 Benvenue Apt #2 Berkeley, Ca. 94705 |
| Name & address of relative, friend MASUI, FUSAJI, FRIEND 653-1273 | Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.] 381-61st Oakland, Calif. |
| Birthplace San Francisco | Length of acquaintance |
| Birthdate September 20, 1913 | Occasion of interview |
| Occupation(s) laundry, life insurance | |

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

| Estimated Time on Tape | Contents |
|---|---|
| Side 1 | Introduction. Born in S.F. in 1913, moved to Oakland for family business reasons to start a cleaner. |
| 0 - 5 minutes/ 0 - 50 counter | Lived at 2423 Myrtle Street first. Then lived at Adeline. Then moved to 2430 Filbert Street. (On the other side of their Union Laundry.) Father came to U.S. in early 1900s, worked in Nebraska on the railroad. |
| 5 - 10 minutes/ 50 - 100 counter | Father married in 1912 -- was an arranged marriage. About 25 people worked at Union Laundry. Mixture of Italians and others on Myrtle Street. Went to Durant Grammar School, then Oakland High right before it closed, then Lowell, then McClymonds. |

Use back of sheet if necessary

-- continued on next page.--

INTERVIEW DATA, cont.
Motomi (Tony) Yokomizo

| Estimated Time on Tape | Contents |
|---|---|
| | Went to the Buddhist Church in Oakland.<br>Sunday a day to look forward to seeing Japanese friends from all over.<br>About 30 Japanese families in West Oakland. |
| 10 - 15 minutes/<br>100 - 155 counter | Market Laundry was on Myrtle Street between 7th and 8th. About 50 Japanese employed there.<br>Discussion of other laundries and Japanese businesses.<br>Many Japanese lived in present-day Chinatown.<br>Shopping and Japanese peddlars discussed. |
| 15 - 20 minutes/<br>155 - 215 | Japanese in laundries discussed.<br>Father did well, but lost a lot of money in an oil gamble in 1929. |
| 20 - 25 minutes/<br>215 - 275 counter | Japanese schools in Oakland -- were two of them. Kids went there in the afternoon after public school. |
| 25 - 30 minutes/<br>275 - 340 counter | Married in 1940 before new laundry was built on Union Street, worked at their Piedmont Laundry previous to that.<br>Family fared pretty well during the Depression.<br>Doesn't remember much about boycotts of Japanese goods. |
| 30 - 35 minutes/<br>340 - 410 counter | Discrimination against Japanese. Wife couldn't get a civil service job.<br>Post Pearl Harbor atmosphere in Oakland discussed. |
| 35 - 40 minutes/<br>410 - 500 counter | Went to Cal one year -- grades weren't so good so decided to go into family's business.<br>Japanese fishermen discussed. |
| 40 - 45 minutes/<br>500 - 590 counter | Selling of business -- not in the position to bargain.<br>Sent to Tanforan first. Belongings were stored in their home in the basement. Everything gone when they returned.<br>Baby born before sent to camps. |
| 45 - 47 minutes/<br>590 - 640 counter | Discussion of relocation camps at Tanforan and Topaz, Utah.<br>Farming. |
| Side 2<br>0 - 5 minutes/<br>0 - 50 counter | Return to West Coast.<br>Work at the Simmons Mattress Company in S.F. |
| 5 - 10 minutes/<br>50 - 105 counter | In '55 moved to 736 Brooklyn Avenue. Had started cleaning in East Oakland in 1949.<br>Cos Loustalot watched over Buddhist Church during internment. |

Interview Data, cont
Motomi (Tony) Yokomizo

| Estimated Time on Tape | Contents |
|---|---|
| 10 - 15 minutes/ 105 - 155 counter | Relationship between Christian and Buddhist Japanese Americans.<br>East Bay Issei Housing. |
| 15 - 20 minutes/ 155 - 215 counter | Difference between laundries.<br>Chinese. |
| 20 - 25 minutes/ 215 - 280 counter | Chinese kept language better than Japanese.<br>Japanese more integrated in American society.<br>The new Japanese arrivals. |
| 25 - 30 minutes/ 280 - 350 counter | Buddhist Church no longer needed by third generation Japanese.<br>Intermarriage. |
| 30 - 35 minutes/ 350 - 420 counter | Athletics.<br>Sunday get-togethers.<br>The New York Restaurant. |
| 35 - 40 minutes/ 420 - 505 counter | 7th Street.<br>The Piedmont Plunge did not allow Japanese.<br>Most Japanese women had to work.<br>Nine children in the Yokomizo family. |
| 40 - 45 minutes/ 505 - 595 counter | Reparation discussed -- relocation needs to be out in the open and documented in American history. |
| 45 - 47 minutes/ 595 - 640 counter | Reparation. |

End of Interview.

OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with: Motomi (Tony) Yokomizo
Date of Interview: 14 September 1981; Oakland, California
Interviewer: Sally Thomas
Transcriber: Sally Thomas
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Notes and Partial Transcription

Tony Yokomizo born in San Francisco in 1913, moved to Oakland as an infant. Parents were in the cleaning business. Father had opportunity to start another cleaner in Oakland, so moved for business reasons -- did not come to family or friends.

2423 Myrtle Street first residence -- lived there while in grammar school. Moved to Adeline Street for a few years. Then moved to 2430 Filbert Street, where laundry was.

Parents from Japan -- father came from Japan in 1902 or 1903. Went to Nebraska, was working on the railroad. Saved his first $1,000.00, so planned on going back to Japan, but friends in San Francisco encouraged him to stay and invest in drycleaning business. Father's family still in Japan -- his brothers and sisters and mother still alive in 1921 when the Yokomizo family went back to visit.

Father married in 1912 when wife was sent over from Japan -- was an arranged marriage -- she came by herself on ship.

First born was Motomi in 1913.

Union Laundry had an entrance on Myrtle and Filbert. Twenty-five people working there -- some of the Japanese lived close by.

On Myrtle were Italians and a black family. One of the black girls from the family was four or five years older than Motomi, used to take him to school. Tony knew everyone on block -- played together as kids. Knew families living three to four houses away.

Went to Durant Grammar School, graduated in 1928 -- was an 8-grade school. For his first semester went to Oakland High, the "old brick pile" on 12th and Jefferson. Then Oakland High moved to its present location on Park Blvd., so went back to Lowell Jr. High for second semester of ninth grade. From there he went to McClymonds -- only ½ block from where he lived. Graduated from McClymonds in 1931. At that time was living at 2430 Filbert.

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Thomas: You went to the Buddhist Church, right?

Yokomizo: Yes. I just about grew up there. I remember since I was in the kindergarten that we used to go there. Actually, in those days, the Japanese people kind of stuck together, and Sunday was the day we looked forward to meet all of our Japanese

Yokomizo, cont: friends at the church. So our activities were based around the church activities. So Sunday was the day that we looked forward to seeing our other friends.

Thomas: Where did they come from -- did they come from West Oakland?

Yokomizo: They came from all over. From as far as Hayward, San Leandro, Richmond. Our present membership is still about the same. There are members from all around the East Bay.

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About thirty Japanese families in West Oakland at the time -- Tony knew most of them.

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Yokomizo: When you say "West Oakland" let's say west of Market Street. There was the Market Laundry which employed about fifty people. They were all Japanese. It was between 7th and 8th on Myrtle Street. The one we had an interest in was Union Laundry which was on 24th and Filbert Street. There was Owl Cleaner on 7th Street. I guess that would be near Adeline. There was a Togo Laundry which hired around twenty people. Then there was another laundry, I can't think of the name -- something like Quick Service. The Yamada family used to run that. Along 7th Street, and right off of 7th Street there was this Market Laundry, Owl Cleaners, Togo Laundry and this Quick Service Laundry. Then there was a little cleaning shop, another one, on 7th Street which I can't recall the name. But there were about five businesses that hired close to maybe sixty, seventy people in total. So those people generally lived in that area. They were all Japanese.

Most of the Japanese in that time lived in what is presently our Chinatown. Some of the flower growers lived in Fruitvale -- east -- out to San Leandro, Hayward. Nurseries like Frank Ogawa's nursery. They were on Krause -- in that area. We never

Yokomizo, cont: had what we call a concentrated Japanese town. And if you want to call it Japanese town it would be the present Chinatown because there were about three grocery stores, a service station, and about two restaurants, and about three barber shops, pool hall were in that present Chinatown that were Japanese. There was even a Chop-Suey House owned by Japanese. So if you call that the Japanese town of pre-war days I would have to say that area would have been what we would call Japanese town of Oakland.

Thomas: Where did you do your shopping?

Yokomizo: In those days these grocery stores that were located in Chinatown had trucks that came to the Japanese homes. So much of the Japanese food and certain vegetable, and items such as fish -- these people handled. Anything like meat or other types of grocery we dealt with the neighborhood groceries. There was about three of these grocery peddlars.

Thomas: Did you ever go outside? Would you ever have reason to go to R.ttos?

Yokomizo: No. I don't think we ever catered to them until recently. Once-in-a-while we go there now, you know, some specialty item we would drop by there and pick up.

Thomas: Was there much competition among the cleaners?

Yokomizo: There was a certain amount of competition but in those days we used to call and deliver. Outside of that, in the East Bay there were . . . let's see . . . we were a little further up on 24th Street, the Union Laundry -- in Berkeley we had the University Laundry and Ashby Laundry, which was still existing until just recently.

Thomas: That was your family?

Yokomizo: No. I'm talking about the Japanese in the laundry business.

Yokomizo, cont: I would say in those days, we probably had about 25% of the whole laundry market in Oakland. There must have been twelve, close to fifteen, just laundries among Japanese.

Thomas: Why did the Japanese get into the laundry business?

Yokomizo: Looking back now the conclusion I came to, we were not able to get jobs in the so-called American industries. So being the type of people the Japanese were at that time, they just decided to get into their own business, which would be grocery, shoe-makers, cleaning, laundry, and landscaping. I guess those five were the main lines of business they could get into. A lot of them got into nursery. They started out as a family nursery but some of them grew. Today, you take like the Sunnyside Nursery in Hayward -- they're nation-wide.

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Story about his father working on the railroad in Nebraska. Was ready to go back to Japan, was a straight fellow.

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Yokomizo: Everything that he apparently touched, he was quite successful. Back in 1926 . . . I was just looking at these old pictures last night because our kids decided, "Let's look at 'em." There was a car parked in front of our house on Filbert Street, and they said, "What kind of a car is this?" So I said, "This is a Kissell car." Back in '26 this thing cost about twenty-four hundred dollars. Cadillacs I think were selling for around twenty-six, twenty-seven at that time. They were saying, "Gee, if he can afford this kind of car in those days he must have been doing alright." So from the business standpoint he was quite successful, I would say.

But he made one big gamble in oil, and that's the thing that wiped him out. This was back in 1929. About the Depression. So that meant we all had to go out and work. I graduated in

Yokomizo, cont: '31 from high school, then I went to Cal for about a year. Then we decided to get in the laundry business again. He wanted to start over. He had sold everything and threw that money into this oil venture. You know, he was quite far-sighted because the oil venture he got into was a venture where they would extract oil from coal. I think he sunk quite a bit of his fortune at that time into it. That fell through so that we got back into the laundry business again.

We bought another laundry. That was located on 3864 Piedmont Avenue.

Thomas: Let me ask more about the church. I understand that the Buddhist Church had its own school.

Yokomizo: That's right. We had our own school. As a matter of fact, in the pre-war days, somewhere around in the early '30s or maybe late '29, we used to have a school which was sponsored by the Buddhist Church of Oakland. It used to be called the "Sho-wa Gukwin" (?). "Gukwin" is "school". Kitty-corner across from the church was the "Wanto Gukwin" which translates to East Bay Japanese School. The two schools were competing in a way. But we had two Japanese schools at that time where students, after completing their courses during the day at the public schools would be picked up by busses and then we would be brought to our school. We studied normally from about four o'clock until five-thirty -- about an hour-and-a-half. Then we'd be delivered home again. The people who lived closer to the Chinatown area naturally walked. We had two busses -- one going to East Oakland and one going to West Oakland. The Wanto Gukwin also had two busses. Today I guess we have to be thankful that our parents gave us the opportunity to study Japanese. I'm ashamed to say that my kids today just don't speak any Japanese. I attended

Yokomizo, cont: Japanese school until I graduated high school. Today conversational Japanese comes easy to me. But as far as reading and writing goes we just don't use it enough to keep that up.

Thomas: When did the schools stop?

Yokomizo: When World War II started this was the demise of all Japanese schools. I think around by 1950, '51, the Buddhist Church has started a Japanese school, but it's just half a day Saturday. That's about the extent. I know in San Francisco and in Berkeley they do have a full course Japanese school where I think after public school you can attend in the afternoon again. Or they have evening schools. But our church in Oakland as far as Japanese schooling goes, it's just on Saturdays.

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Married in 1940, was working at Piedmont Laundry before then. In 1937 built a laundry plant on Union Street and 21st. So was in laundry business from 1933 til war.

Struggled but somehow managed.

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Thomas: How did the Depression affect your family?

Yokomizo: I think the real crunch came when I was still going to school. I remember when I was going to Cal I told my dad, "I think I need a typewriter." So he says, "How much do you need?" So I says, "Well, I think maybe seventy-five dollars would be enough, so I'll get a used one." I don't know how much a typewriter cost then, but I remember he gave me seventy-five dollars. I wasn't quite ready to go buy one so I put it in my savings account at Central Bank in Oakland, and the bank folded up. (laughter) I didn't get my seventy-five dollars . . . well, eventually they paid it back. We were fortunate enough where my father could say, "Well here's seventy-five dollars, why don't

Yokomizo, cont: you get a typewriter." But those are some of the things that I can remember during the Depression years.

Thomas: In 1938 there was a boycott of shipping scrap iron to Japan, and there was a "Don't buy Japanese goods" campaign to protest Japanese attacks on China. Do you remember that?

Yokomizo: I don't remember too much, but I know that Japan was being boycotted because of their so-called aggression in Manchuria. I know that those things existed, but I didn't have too much interest in those days in that type of news. I know that the yen, which was two to one became four to one. Those are things that I remember. I knew that there were certain boycott propaganda and programs which were instigated against Japan -- I remember those, but not too much in detail.

Thomas: You didn't feel any type of resentment? How did you identify -- as being Japanese or American?

Yokomizo: Being Japanese we were so close to our parents, which is the first generation. The first generation is Japanese anyway. I think that a lot of that was instilled in us. We kind of hated to see any confliction of that nature, although we realized we are Americans, and if we have to take up arms or anything like that we would naturally be in the United States Army or the Service. But you're kind of sandwiched in-between. You have reservations. You have feelings of, "Well, I hope nothing happens."

But once the cards are laid out, and if we have to decide, well, then, naturally we had no interest in Japan. That's the way I always felt. I would naturally join the United States force.

Thomas: When did you notice people start to treat you differently?

Yokomizo: One thing we knew was we couldn't get civil service jobs. We had a hard time breaking that line. As a matter of fact,

Yokomizo, cont: my wife, when she got out of school, out of Armstrong, she applied for a job at the Alameda County. Her test shows very high but when the interview came about she was eliminated or put down to second or third. This would be in the early thirties. There was definite discrimination at that time. Of course, maybe from the standpoint of the county employers or the business employers, they probably didn't know how we would work. In a way maybe you couldn't blame them, either. We looked different. It's not like today where everything is supposed to be wide open. In those days you qualified for a position but there's always way to get around you. I had friends that graduated as engineers -- they couldn't get a job. So they were gardening. This person, after the war broke out, he finally relocated to New Jersey, and there he finally got into his engineering job. He finally ended up in the city planning department before he retired. He passed away just recently. That was typical of the discrimination in those days.

Thomas: (Getting the book, Nisei -- The Quiet Americans, turning to page 254 and showing picture of the Wanto Grocery Store in Oakland with big sign, "I AM AN AMERICAN" posted in front.)

Yokomizo: (Recognizing it immediately.) Yes, this is the Wanto Grocery. It's on the corner of 8th and Franklin Street. It's an open lot right now. It used to be across the street from Hamburger Joe's.

Thomas: Did you see a lot of signs like that?

Yokomizo: This was a sign which the Japanese-American put out because after all, the operation was being run by the second generation. Many of the first generation were in their late fifties or sixties, and the second generation was at the time where they were taking over their business. At the outbreak of the war the parents would

okomizo, cont: stay home, and we would go out and face the public. Although I had a laundry I didn't come up with any sign like that. Many of my customers would say, "Well Tony, what is your feeling on this?" After they asked me they'd say, "Okay, you can continue to pick up my laundry." But those were the people that were real understanding. Those who were not understanding would just not come into our shops anymore, or they would phone up and say, "Don't pick up the laundry next week."

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Oldest of second generation would be about seventy-five years old, possibly eighty years old. Yokomizo says his is representative of about 75% of the second generation -- he is sixty-eight. Average level of second generation today is about fifty-eight or fifty-nine years old.

Yokomizo didn't really want to continue at Cal -- his grades were "wishy-washy", so decided to get into his father's business.

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Yokomizo: My parents were very disappointed that I made this choice, but then after all, they said, "Well, it's your choice, and if this is what you want, that's okay." That's how it ended.

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Most Japanese fishermen were in Monterey area and in Southern California -- San Pedro area. Some in Seattle area.

But Japanese did run fishing-tackle shops, so that would account for Martin Durante's story about people walking around with fishing poles, etc. after the internment.

Most Japanese fishermen into sardines in Monterey, not salmon, like in the Bay Area. Tuna fishermen are in the San Pedro area.

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Yokomizo: December was the bombing of Pearl Harbor, so around by April we were getting information that we would be evacuated, so get rid of your business. This was the picture that we were faced with. So whenever we got a chance to make these moves we did. I had built this plant, which was about a fifty by one hundred

Yokomizo, cont: square brick building, and one of our local Exchange Linen Company asked me if I would lease the building to them. So this is what I did.

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Gave the Exchange Linen Company an option to buy, and they did, a year later. Yokomizo was not in the position to bargain -- was at their mercy, so he just wanted to get his money, and be satisfied with a minimum.

Building cost Yokomizo about $7500.00. He sold it for $10000.00. When he got back from the camps he met up with the owner and found the building was worth $30,000.00.

In April or May family sent to Tanforan Race Track. In September sent to Topaz, Utah.

Kept belongings in their basement since they owned their home -- padlocked it and boarded it up. Brought delicate items to attorney's home. Everything was gone when they returned. Attorney said he couldn't watch everything . . .

Yokomizo married in October 1940. Had a daughter by the time the war broke out.

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Yokomizo: All our wedding gifts -- some had never been out of the box, but they were all gone.

Since we had a family -- we had one little baby -- they gave us a barrack, not the horse stall that the single people were put in, or couples without any family were put in the horse stalls. They had built the army type of barracks. Since there were three of us we were able to get what they called a family room. But it was still not much bigger than this room here. It wasn't partitioned. We had to hang ropes to make partitions there.

Then in September we were moved to Topaz, Utah. And here again we had the same set-up. Only this time they gave us lumber so that we could make it a more permanent type of partitions. We got there in September and in October there was a call for workers on a farm. I felt I should go out. So I went out. Some of them said, "No, they're not going out." But I always felt

izo, cont: that this was my country, and whatever I can do I should be helping. So I went out and harvested sugar beets. Then I share-cropped with the owner two more years after that. I almost became a farmer. (laughter) The third year I went there as a worker, and the following two years I share-cropped with the farmer.

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e were quite a few who farmed. Some went as far north as Idaho.

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n Tape 1 Side 2

ied to come back to West Coast in 1946. Came back briefly in to talk with attorney. Had not yet discovered that his possessions been stolen. He returned to Utah.

d back to Oakland in 1946 -- discovered goods were stolen. Wished ad stored goods at the Buddhist Church.

947 most Japanese had returned to California, the West Coast.

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as: How did you feel about coming back to the area?

mizo: We had some certain reservations. We were wondering how we'd be treated. The neighborhood hadn't changed that much. These were kids that I went to school with, so it wasn't that bad. But I didn't have any business of my own so I went to work for Simmons Mattress Company. They were one of the first non-Japanese company that hired Japanese nationals. The time I went there, there were about 150 Japanese-Americans working there. I think they had a total employment of about 1500 at that time. I worked there for about a year and-a-half. Then I got into the cleaning business.

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tle back at 2430 Filbert Street -- owned that home. Father had l before the war, in 1937. Mother lived at Filbert with them. ved at Filbert until around 1955. In '55 moved to 736 Brooklyn nue, east of Lake Merritt. Moved to be closer to his business -- started cleaning shop on 5th Avenue and E. 12th in 1949.

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Thomas: Did most Japanese people come back to West Oakland?

Yokomizo: No. Very few came back because they were renting. Most of the families were renting. We were one of the few people that had our own home. By the time we got back most of West Oakland had completely changed. So they had no reason to go back in there. They scattered all over. They were spread all over -- from East Oakland to North Oakland. But not in their former location.

Thomas: Were there any pockets of Japanese families? Did they move together?

Yokomizo: In Berkeley this was true. In Oakland we just scattered all over. The only thing that was left was our Buddhist Church.

Thomas: Cos Loustalot and his wife were said to have watched over the Buddhist Church after the Japanese were taken away.

Yokomizo: He was one of the first American, Caucasian, let's say, that really helped the Japanese community. I think he's only about three or four years older than I am, about seventy now. He was a Chevrolet salesman at Cochran and Sally. (?) He found out that the other salesmen were really overcharging the Japanese who were buying Chevrolets at that time, and any other cars as a matter of fact. So he came down to what the true price was with the true interest rate and everything. Once the Japanese found out that he was a straight-shooter and went to bat for us -- there was a time I think when every family had a Chevrolet. (laughter) This was what made him, and he finally became an insurance broker. Even then, after that, he would treat the Japanese family just like he would treat his own group. For this reason he was looked at as one of the Caucasion people that really helped the Japanese. There weren't too many.

It got to the point where if something happened, let's say your hot water heater went out, they'd call him. And he'd say,

Yokomizo, cont: "Why don't you call so and so." He was that helpful. I thought he was a wonderful person. When we packed all of our goods into the church he says, "I'll watch the church and take care of it. I'll keep it going." When we had our seventy-fifth anniversary in 1974 we honored him. Even today he's still very helpful.

Thomas: What was the relationship between Japanese who were Buddhist and Japanese who were Christian?

Yokomizo: My wife and I often talk about this. At that time there was the Oakland Methodist Church which was located on 10th and West. We were located at 6th and Jackson at that time. My wife and I often talk about the good relationship that we had. We used to have socials together, we'd have discussion groups. They would come to our church or we would go to their church. I'm still involved in church and I still think that the church as a whole is the most narrow-minded group. They preach a lot of good things but when it comes to actual performance I think they fall way behind. But in those days the Methodist Church and the Buddhist Church used to have all these socials and invite each other to dance parties, and so forth. This is strictly second generation. First generation probably had feelings which I wouldn't know. Among the second generation I thought we had a very nice relationship. Today we don't have that. After the war it ended. We don't get into each other's hair -- we don't bother them, they don't bother us.

But we have a group now which is called the East Bay Issei Housing. This organization was created to see if we could get some HUD money for our senior citizen home. This organization constitutes all of the religious, social, the citizen's league organization of the whole East Bay and Contra Costa County. As

Yokomizo, cont: far as I can see right now we get along pretty good. There's about twenty-four organizations. This includes all the Japanese Christian churches as well as all the Buddhist churches in the East Bay. So I think the matter of church is an individual preference or matter. We don't talk about, "How come you're not a Buddhist, or, how come you're a Buddhist."

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East Bay Issei Housing (EBIH) has been organized for four years. They will find out this month if they'll get the 7 million + for this area -- there are seven or eight groups competing for the same money.

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Yokomizo: The American laundries, the white laundries, charged a higher price, we were second, and the Chinese had the lowest price. The Chinese and Japanese did a lot of handwork equipment in addition to the shirt unit. So I think we produced a better quality work. We weren't as efficient as the white laundry because they were all mechanized. Of course in the later years we were just as well mechanized as they were. But here again it's their own individual opinion. Each landry felt that they did the best job.

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At Union Laundry employed anyone -- employed black women, and black men, too. Pay was eighteen to twenty cents an hour in those days. Or thirty-five cents. Top man in laundry in '30s made 75¢ to $1.00 an hour. Paychecks for ladies who worked on a mangle were twenty to twenty-five dollars a week.

Italian women worked at the Union Laundry -- had a crew of about ten Italian women. Mostly women worked at the laundries.

Relationship between Chinese and Japanese -- each minded their own business.

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Yokomizo: In pre-war days the Japanese community was co-mingled with the Chinese community. So we got along alright. We were both being discriminated, anyway.

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Japanese have had hard time identifying difference between Chinese and Japanese. Can still identify Koreans, but Chinese and Japanese look very similar now. In '20s and '30s could tell the difference: Chinese had sallow colored skin -- Japanese had darker skin.

Old Chinese immigrants who wore pig tails and the Chinese women with bound feet. Chinese here are in their fourth and fifth generations.

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Yokomizo: What used to amaze me was the fact that the Chinese family in our days all spoke and wrote Chinese much more effectively than we did. They went to Chinese school after school, too. But I think their schooling was much more efficient. They were made to learn.

Mrs. Yokomizo: Generation after generation. I think even now the young ones speak some Chinese.

Yokomizo: When I compare Chinese and Japanese I think the Japanese are integrated a little better than the Chinese. The Chinese still hold on to their groups -- closer than we do. This is my own personal feeling. I could be all wrong. The Chinese families all spike Chinese, especially in our generation. Whereas even in our second generation there were a lot of Japanese who couldn't speak Japanese. Now when it became the third generation I think we failed in not teaching our children the second language.

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Attempt to bring language back, but not much hope.

Second wave so-to-speak of Japanese immigrants coming now are "resented" by established Japanese Americans.

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Yokomizo: Where there is a lot of Japanese nationals coming in after World War II, after Japan has developed all these companies in the states, this is a situation which creates a little problem. Because anything that they do we get blamed for.

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Discussion of Japanese car industry and anti-Japanese sentiment concerning that.

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Yokomizo: . . . the people just can't distinguish the difference between the new Japanese that came with the business as against the Japanese who have been living here all their lives.

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First and second generation of Japanese were all classified as same group -- therefore no problem.

Buddhist church was strong for unity and communication among Japanese until after World War II -- now deteriorating.

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Yokomizo: . . . most of the second generation and third generation today do not have to rely on the activities of the church as a center where they can congregate and meet people. They meet their own people and with the so-called affluency of the second and third generation Japanese now. They don't have to come to the church now to find recreation or meeting with the groups, and so forth. They have their own speed boats and their own second house at the Lake Tahoe area, and they have their non-Japanese friends that they associate with. So the church itself as a center is not as important as it was during the first generation and our second generation era.

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Intermarriage between Japanese and non-Japanese in second generation looked at "with jaundice eye". First generation did not encourage marriage outside of Japanese. More intermarriage in third generation.

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Yokomizo: Of course we are Americanized to the point where this is the way the life is in the United States, and we accept it a lot easier than our parents did. Our parents would say, "If you marry outside you're through -- you're not part of our family."

Yokomizo: Although, I'll be honest with you, I would like to see our children marry in our own church as well as to another Japanese. I think this is true with most of us.

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Have three children -- all married, one divorced -- all married Japanese. Oldest daughter lives in San Jose -- has one child and is now divorced. Son, second child, lives in Dublin. Daughter, youngest, lives in Piedmont.

As a child played baseball and kick-the-can in the streets. Buddhist church has had basketball teams. Basketball goes back to early days, church didn't have baseball teams, but Oakland did, Alameda had a team, and Berkeley had a team, and San Jose had a team -- farming communities. There was a Japanese league. Also teams in Stockton, Lo-Di (?), Monterey and Salinas.

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Thomas: Did you stay mostly in your neighborhood, in West Oakland?

Yokomizo: Yeah. We stayed in our neighborhood. The only time that we would go down to the church would be the weekends. But here again, people from Hayward, and San Leandro as well as Berkeley would come down, too.

Thomas: The big get-togethers were on Sundays?

Yokomizo: Usually the Sundays, we would start out with the Sunday school in the morning. And it was a big deal for us to get two bits and go down 7th Street to one of the restaurants and have lunch. Then we'd come back to the church and we'd be playing all afternoon. In the afternoon the parents would be having their service, and so the parents would pick us up and take us home. So this is how we used to spend our Sundays.

Thomas: When you went to the restaurant, did you go just with the kids?

Yokomizo: Yeah -- with the kids. That was really a big deal. In those days for twenty-five cents you got a whole meal! It used to be called New York Restaurant on Broadway, between 7th and 8th Street. Japanese used to run that.

Thomas: Was it Japanese cuisine?

Yokomizo: No. It was strictly American. We would get enough for lunch for twenty-five cents. We could get pot roast and something like that. With bread and milk or whatever we wanted. 7th Street was kind of a main road. Of course Broadway always was the main road in Oakland. 7th Street cuts in perpendicularly. There was quite a few businesses on 7th Street. Let's see . . . there was a jewelry shop, an optometry shop, a leather wholesale shop and there were a couple of bath house and some restaurants, barber shops -- that's Japanese businesses.

Thomas: All of those were?

Yokomizo: Yeah. Besides the Chinese and American business. They were mixed.

Thomas: Were there any "off limits" for you as a child?

Yokomizo: The only "off limit" was the swimming pool. You know where the Sheppard Cadillac is right now on 27th and Harrison? That used to be called the Piedmont Plunge before. There used to be a swimming pool there -- it was indoor. That was one place we couldn't get in, but I got to know a friend, a security police at Sears Roebuck real well. This was just before the war. He says, "I want to take you swimming. Do you swim?" And I say, "Well, I swim a little bit." So he says, "Okay, I'll take you." So he took me to this Piedmont Plunge. That night there was a group of police going through their so-called training. He was part of the police department so he took me as his guest. When I got to the admission gate there we stopped. There was a little conversation going, but finally they let me in. But that was the only place off limits as far as I know. There was no restaurant that we couldn't get into. This was one of the discriminations.

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Parents didn't give them limits, but didn't need to apparently.

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Yokomizo: We were all good kids then! (laughter)

Thomas: Who was the disciplinarian -- your father or mother?

Yokomizo: It was my mother! She was the one that was really noisy in my family.

Thomas: Did your mother work at the laundry?

Yokomizo: No. She was always the laundry owner's wife. She stayed home.

Thomas: Did most Japanese women work?

Yokomizo: I think most of them worked. In that time we were one of the fortunate families. Most of the women worked. My mother didn't have to work until after he passed away in '37. When she started to work she used to work with me. She would always put in her twenty-five cents worth. So we both kind of ran it together. But until then she never worked.

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Nine children in his family -- one of the larger families, but not uncommon. Mother relied on Motomi since he was the oldest. Fourth sister moved to Chicago after the internment. One went to Milwaukee. One went to Evanston. Many moved East because jobs were offered in the East and Mid-west.

Had to apply to go back to California.

Some, the "outspoken" ones, were sent to Tule Lake -- those who resisted the American government sent there.

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Thomas: What do you think about the recent trials and the reparation?

Yokomizo: I feel that the record of the relocation should be a part of the American history and not hided. Because I think most people, let's say like your age, if you hadn't read about it in history or hadn't been involved in this type of affair, you probably wouldn't know anything about it. So I think <u>that</u> is important, that we get this into the history, that these are some

Yokomizo, cont: of the things that happened. As far as the monetary reparation goes, my personal feeling is I would rather leave this up to the committee. If someone says, "Well we want to repay you and here's a check," I don't think anyone would refuse it. But I personally don't want to demand it.

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Attept at reparation after the war, but only with receipts of losses or estimate of personal belongings stolen. No reparation for loss of income or business losses.

End of Interview.

One of the last comments Motomi Yokomizo made, but after the tape had ended was that he admired and appreciated what the blacks have done for civil rights. Without their demands for civil rights, Japanese Americans and other "minorities" might still be facing the blatant discrimination of the past.

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POSSIBLE PHOTOS FOR COPYING: Family portrait that dates back to around 1930. Three of the children are not in the photo because one had not been born, and two sisters are missing because they were in Japan at the time.

Studio credit listed is the "Tsuji Studio" address: 814 Franklin Street, Oakland.

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Photo of family in front of their home at 2430 Filbert, dating back to 1926. Parked in front is the Kissell car Mr. Yokomizo mentions in the interview. Also in view is the sign for their Union Laundry Company.

Next door to the laundry lived a black family and next door to the Yokomizos was an Englishman named Fred Watcher.

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There is also Motomi's passport from 1921 when he was 8 years old and visited relatives in Japan.

Tony Yokomizo and his wife Nobuye

West Oakland resident